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Tropicalia, Transe-Brechtianismo and the Multicultural Theme

My paper will focus on the Brazilian artistic movement called Tropicalia, and especially on the music of Caetano Veloso and Gilberto Gil. Here I will directly explore their treatment of transnational and multicultural history and themes as examples of political agency within popular culture. As a kind of conceptual video-jockey, I will counterpoint historical commentary and analysis with a series of musical video-clips. (The handouts will provide an itinerary, along with English translations of the lyrics of the songs.)

The Tropicalists have been much in the news of late, due to Gil's appointment as Brazil's Minister of Culture, the publication in English of Caetano's *Tropical Truth*, and the various Grammys, awards and film roles awarded to the two artists, such as Caetano's appearance in Almodovar's *Habla con Ella*. Journalistic critics of the English translation of Caetano's memoirs were astonished to encounter a pop-star who could write like Proust and speak knowingly not only about French, American, and Brazilian culture but also about postmodernism and globalization, in a text where names like Ray Charles and James Brown would brush up easily against names like Stockhausen, Wittgenstein, and Deleuze. Both Caetano and Gil, it seems to me, are Orphic intellectuals, or to play on Gramsci's "organic intellectual", "Orphoganic" intellectuals: they write books in one moment and lead dancing crowds in another. Reconciling the Dionysian and the Apollonian, they are not only the performers of popular culture, they are also its theoreticians.

As a multi-art movement, Tropicalia melded the popular and the erudite, the Brazilian and the international, the anachronistic and the contemporary, exposing Brazil's contradictions to what Roberto Schwarz called "the white light of ultra-modernity". Caetano responded to Roberto Schwartz' analysis of this "absurdity" in his song

“Love, Love, Love”. Brazil may be “absurdo”, Caetano wrote, “mas Brasil nao e surdo, ja que tem ouvido musical”.

Only a tiny proportion of the Tropicalia songs are “love songs”; the composers simply grant themselves the right to speak about anything and everything. In “Pela Internet”, for example, Gil addresses the possibilities opened up by the Internet, but he multi-culturalizes the discussion by linking the new media to Afro-Brazilian culture, reminding us that West-African religions too were concerned with mediums and communication. More recently, Gil has become embroiled in the debates about “intellectual property rights”. In the spirit of indigenous notions of communal property, Gil is releasing some of his songs under the Creative Commons License so that others may freely “cannibalize” them. In a generous gesture of recombinant transtextuality, Gil, who has himself devoured so many influences, now offers the body of his own work to be devoured by others.

My use of the metaphor of cannibalism is not, of course, accidental. It is well-known that the Tropicalia movement drew on the favored modernist trope of “anthropophagy”. Instead of the “bon sauvage” of the Romantics, the Modernistas preferred the “Bad Indian”, the cannibal, the devourer of the white European colonizer. Radicalizing the Enlightenment valorization of indigenous Amerindian freedom and equality, the modernists highlighted aboriginal matriarchy and communalism as a utopian model for a society free of coercion and hierarchy. The philo-indigenism of the modernists, like that of the French philosophes, enabled a deep anthropological critique of the political and moral bases of Eurocentric civilization.

Tropicalia too was strongly influenced by “anthropophagy” which can be seen as the global South’s version of “intertextuality”, now viewed from the standpoint of neo-colonial power relations. Like the Modernists, the Tropicalists were eager to cannibalize artistic movements from around the world. While the modernists devoured dada and surrealism, as Caetano himself put it, the Tropicalists devoured Jimi Hendrix and the Beatles, all part of a campy pastiche aesthetic which has sometimes been seen as a form of postmodernism *avant la lettre*.

More than any other, it was Glauber Rocha’s 1967 film “Terra em Transe” that helped crystallize the Tropicalia movement. Caetano delineated the film’s impact on the movement. “That whole Tropicalist

thing”, as Caetano famously put it, “became clear to me the day I saw “Terra em Transe”. My heart exploded during the opening sequence, when, to the sound of a *candomblé* chant, an aerial shot of the sea brings us to the coast of Brazil” (Veloso 1997: 99). Without that “traumatic moment”, Caetano writes, “nothing of what came to be called tropicalism would have ever existed” (Veloso 1997: 105).

A baroque allegory about Brazilian politics, “Terra em Transe” is set in an imaginary country called Eldorado, but which looks very much like Brazil. The “Primeira Missa” fantasy sequence stages a tense encounter between African, indigenous, and European cultures: In this sequence, the character Porfirio Diaz, named after the Mexican ruler, arrives from the sea, in a scene suggesting a primal fable of national origins. Virtually any Brazilian spectator will recognize the reference to Cabral’s “First Mass”, celebrated with the Indians in April of the year 1500. But Rocha’s treatment of this primal theme departs dramatically from earlier artistic representations such as Victor Meirelles’ famous 1861 painting or Humberto Mauro’s 1937 *Descobrimento do Brasil*. By conflating Cabral with the *coup d’état* engineered by Diaz, Rocha symbolically links the 16th century Conquest with 20th-century neo-colonialism and fascist *coup d’états*. Diaz is implied to be a latter-day reincarnation of the *conquistadores*. In so doing, Glauber answers the modernists’ call for the “Decabralization” of Brazil.

It is noteworthy that what first impressed Caetano in “Terra em Transe” was the conjunction of aerial shots of the Brazilian coast with the music of *candomblé*, a synthesis of image and music which powerfully evokes the cultural crucible of the Black Atlantic. The very aesthetic of the Rocha sequence draws heavily on the Africanized forms of Rio’s yearly samba pageant, with its zany historicism, and its carnivalesque delight in anachronistic allegorias; indeed, the actor who plays the conquistador is Clovis Bornay, a historian specialized in carnival pageantry and well-researched “fantasias”. Secondly, the mass is accompanied not by Christian religious music, but by Yoruba religious chants, evoking the “transe” of the Portuguese title. Rocha’s suggestive referencing of African music implies that Africans too formed part of this primal encounter which gave birth to modernity and, ultimately, to globalization.

Since we are here in Berlin, just a short distance from the site of the Berliner Ensemble, it seems appropriate to open a parenthesis concerning the relation between Brecht, Rocha, and Tropicalia. The period of “Terra em Transe” and Tropicalia coincided with the height of Brechtian influence in Brazil. The Marxist Brecht, ironically, was the most popular playwright in Brazil during the military dictatorship, with ten different Brecht productions in 1968 alone. Brechtian theories exerted a strong influence on theatre groups like Arena and Oficina, and on filmmakers like Rui Guerra, Leon Hirszman, and Arnaldo Jabor. Rocha, for his part, was deeply impacted by a 1960 Salvador performance of Brecht’s “Dreigroschenoper” and he famously proclaimed that his three artistic gurus were Shakespeare, Eisenstein, and Brecht. Apart from his own hopes of making an adaptation of the “Dreigroschenoper” and his efforts to involve Orson Welles in an adaptation of “Galileo”, Rocha endorsed many aspects of Brechtian aesthetics, such as anti-illusionism, direct-address, epic interpretation, and contradiction between sound and image.

“Terra em Transe” exemplifies what I would call, playing on both meanings of the word “transe”, a “Transe-Brechtian Aesthetic”. Rocha carnivalizes and Africanizes Brecht, filtering his ideas through the “transe” of West African possession religions. While Brecht deploys contradiction and disjunction between image and sound, Rocha goes further by staging the historical contradictions between vast cultural complexes – European, African, indigenous – existing in relations of subordination and domination. The Catholic mass is superimposed on music which incarnates precisely the religion suppressed by Christianity, so here the music comes to represent not only an aesthetic disjunction but also the return of the historically repressed. The scene’s fractured and discontinuous aesthetic stages the drama of life in the colonial “contact zone”, defined by what Mary Louise Pratt calls “conditions of coercion, radical inequality, and intractable conflict”. Rocha’s neo-baroque Afro-avantgardist aesthetic here figures the discontinuous, dissonant, fractured history of the multi-nation through equally dissonant images and sounds. Here style itself becomes national (and transnational) allegory.

The brief sequence from “Terra em Transe” offers a glimpse of what Tropicalia might share with Glauber Rocha. First, we find a common critique of the conservative cultural politics of the traditional

left, with its preference for the folklorized rural over the mass-mediated urban, its resistance to technical innovations like the electric guitar, and its protectionist defense of what Caetano calls an “indigenous reserve of samba”. Like “Terra em Transe”, Tropicalia generated centrifugal, dispersive texts that fracture the left-populist cultural consensus; they performed a kind of electroshock on dominant paradigms, excoriating both the reactionary Right and the populist Left. Second, Tropicalia absorbed Glauber’s emphasis on the unharmonizable contradictions of Brazil, no longer smoothed over in the name of homogenizing ideologies like “racial democracy” or “Luso-Tropicalism” (Indeed, Caetano preferred the term “Tropicalia” to “Tropicalismo” precisely because it avoided the association with Gilberto Freyre). Third, Tropicalia absorbed Glauber’s Janus-faced openness not only to the popular but also to the avant-garde, whether Brecht and Godard in the case of Rocha, or Concretism and Oiticicca in the case of Tropicalia. Fourth, Tropicalia shared with Glauber the parodic return to foundational myths and national icons, whether Cabral’s “First Mass” in the case of Rocha, or Carmen Miranda in the case of Caetano, all epitomized in the triple pun of “Carmen Miranda-dada”, alluding simultaneously to Carmen Miranda, to the Dada movement, and to the *cangaceiro* couple Corisco and Dada. Fifth, Caetano took from Glauber the idea of an anti-illusionist, transtemporal, and multi-chronotopic aesthetic, one with the audacity to take on vast historical questions. Finally, Caetano too was “Brechtian” in his way. Apart from admiring the work of Brecht-influenced artists like Glauber and Boal, Caetano refers in *Tropical Truth* (Veloso 2002) to his “Brechtian” use of popular icons like Carmen Miranda. But like Glauber, Caetano and Gil were also “transe-Brechtianos”. Their work goes beyond Brechtian rationalism and scientism, with its emphasis on class, to open up wider social contradictions revolving around race and gender and sexuality and culture.

“Tropicalia” favors a carnivalesque “aesthetic of mistakes”, in which artistic language is liberated from the stifling norms of correctness. Carnavalesque art is thus “anti-canonical”; it deconstructs not only the canon, but also the generating matrix that makes canons and grammaticality. In *Verdade Tropical*, Caetano evokes something like this aesthetic revolution when he speaks of a “ransformation of the very criteria of taste” (Veloso 1997: 147). Tropicalism, for Caetano,

strives for an “equilibrio desequilibrado, feito samba” an awkward equilibrium comparable to the off-balance grace of samba or frevo. (We find this off-balance quality in the CD “Livros”, where the Olodum-style drumming sometimes does not “synthesize” completely with the neo-bossa style of the melody). What impressed Caetano in Glauber’s films, similarly, was not “the attempt to do things correctly [...] but rather the making of mistakes and succeeding on a completely different level, according to a new set of criteria for judging what was correct and what was not” (Veloso 1997: 101).

The music of Caetano and Gil is deeply imbued with Afro-diasporic cultural values. “Beleza Pura” exalts the Africanization of Bahia and the cultural take-over by the Afro-blocos. Consistently, Caetano’s music associates black women with beauty, as in the song “Neide Candolina”, a tribute to two black women from Salvador. The city, Caetano suggests, should have more respect for “Liberdade”, a play on the word for freedom but also the name of Salvador’s largest black neighborhood. And Caetano has constantly dialogued with African-American singers, whether through “covers” of songs by Nat King Cole or Michael Jackson, or through shrewd commentaries about the music, as in his wonderfully evocative homage to James Brown’s screams, which (quote) “tear in a clean rip over the lean swing of his band”.

Another striking feature of Tropicalia, shared with Glauber Rocha’s work, is its diasporic, transnational allusiveness; Caetano and Gil take the entire world as their province. One of the most beautiful songs ever written about New York City, for example, is Caetano Veloso’s “Manyata”. Although not all listeners are aware of the fact, “Manyata” paints a scene set along the lower bay of the Hudson river, in an indeterminate time anachronistically mingling centuries of history. The word “Manyata” constitutes a Brazilianized pronunciation of Manhattan, an example of transcultural filtration, where an indigenous American name is heard “through” an equally indigenized Portuguese. Within Caetano’s allegory, the river is obviously the Hudson; the woman in the canoe is obviously native American, the Goddess of Legend is the Statue of Liberty, and the “whirlpool of money” is Wall Street. The young woman in Caetano’s canoe, in this sense, is palimpsestically symbolic: she is at the same time Eve in a prelapsarian Eden, and a native American woman in a pre-Columbian world, but

she is also a native Brazilian woman, more particularly a Tupi woman, since Caetano calls her a “cunha”, Tupi for “young woman”. By linking the native American woman to the torch symbolism of the Statue of Liberty, Caetano hints at the central role of the “Indian” in the “American”, French, and Brazilian versions of the Enlightenment.

In his music too, Gilberto Gil forges links between widely separated cultural worlds. His song “From Bob Dylan to Bob Marley: Samba-Provocation”, for example, forges a creative counterpoint between the Jewish-American Bob Dylan, the African-American Michael Jackson, and the Jamaican Rastafarian Bob Marley, all filtered through a Brazilian sensibility open to Africa, Europe, and all of the Americas. The refrain goes as follows: “Bob Marley died/ Because besides being black/ he was also Jewish/ Michael Jackson/ meanwhile/ is still around/ Because besides becoming white/ He’s become very sad.” Speaking more generally, Gil has served as a kind of musical “bard” of the Black Atlantic. Not only has he performed with musicians like Jimmy Cliff, Stevie Wonder, and Youssou N’Dour, he has also referred both lyrically and stylistically to the variegated musical forms of the Black Atlantic. “Sugar Cane Fields Forever”, for examples, traces popular music to its origins in the cane fields of slavery. For decades, Gil has been composing musical odes to Afro-Brazilian religious culture, whether to candomblé, as in “Iemanjá” or to macumba, as in “Batmakumba”. Aware of the legacy of racialized repression around the diaspora, Gil composed the anti-apartheid song “A Prayer for Freedom in South Africa” (1985) and created the theme song “Touche pas a mon Pote” for the French anti-racist movement “SOS Racisme”. His song “Quilombo” memorialized Palmares, the 17th century maroon republic founded by fugitive slaves. The lyrics go, in part:

It existed
That black Eldorado of Brazil
It existed
Like a burst of light that freedom created
It reflected
The light of divinity the holy fire of Olorum
[roughly, the Yoruba concept of God]
It revived
A Utopia of One for All and All for One

The next video clips deal with the latter-day legacies of conquest and slavery, both in the negative form of dispossession and brutality, and

the positive form of artistic expression as a sublimation of historical pain. The first musical clip deals with a phenomenon common to most of the Black Atlantic countries – police brutality against black people. What differentiates the Brazilian case from the US case is the fact that police violence in Brazil is in a sense “integrated”, that is, the police who brutalize people of color are often themselves black or of mixed race. This difference derives, many would argue, from two historically distinct modalities of domination, the Anglo-segregationist model more typical of the US, and the Latin assimilationist model more typical of Brazil. Historically, the major confrontations of Brazilian history – Palmares, the Bandeiras, Canudos – have not simply pitted black against white; people of color have fought on both sides, even if an overarching white domination still structures the whole. As a result of these historical differences, the situation in Brazil lacks the stark clarity of a Rodney King-style white/black police confrontation. Indeed, the recent cases where private camcorders registered police abuses illustrate these differences. In 1997, both in the Rio slum “Cidade de Deus”, and in the Sao Paulo slum “Diadema”, police were recorded systematically beating, robbing, and even killing *favela* residents.

A song which artfully analyzes such phenomena is the Caetano/Gil song “Haiti é Aqui”. To my mind, this single song says as much about the lived modalities of racial and class oppression in the Black Atlantic as a whole series of dissertations. The lyrics describe a scene in which Caetano himself played a role. Just as he was being awarded a “Citizenship Award” on a stage overlooking Salvador’s historic Pelourinho Square, Caetano saw mostly black police beating up a mostly black, or *mestizo*, or poor white crowd.

The song’s refrain – “Haiti is here, Haiti is not here” – alludes to a famous quotation from the Brazilian philosopher Silvio Romero. Almost a century after the Haitian revolution, Romero warns that “Brazil is not, and should not be, Haiti”. The lyrics link Brazil to Haiti as a double site, both of a black revolutionary past and of a neo-colonial present, an association even more resonant in the light of recent events in Haiti. But here style is inseparable from substance. Brazilian popular music often encodes cultural tensions and syncretisms, not only through lyrics but also through melody, harmony, and percussion. Popular music, through its *mise-en-scène* and performance, allegorizes

the nation. This particular song stages the power relations between Europe and Africa, between cello and the surdo, between melody and percussion, between the Casa Grande and the Senzala. But here the cello itself is percussive, and yelps with pain at the blows of the police. The song is declaimed, furthermore, in rap style, a style associated with black Americans, but also linked to Brazilian traditions such as “repente” and “talking sambas”. The rap style introduces a note of anger and aggressiveness, an implicit break with the sweeter harmonies of bossa nova and the suave discourses of “racial democracy”. The aggressiveness contrasts even with the sweetness of Caetano’s own “Menino do Rio”, whose refrain – “Havai, seja aqui” – the song both echoes and transforms. Here relations are no longer cordial and the music is no longer sweet, instead we find the politicization of avant-gardist dissonance. The lyrics also recall the legacy of slavery and the pillory as the site of disciplinary punishments – “Pelourinho” after all means pillory. But now the whipping post has given way to mass incarceration and police murder. A pause in the music allows for a dramatic announcement of the murder by police of more than a hundred inmates at Carandiru prison, a kind of Brazilian Attica prison massacre. Yet these events do not shock because of the *doxa* disseminated throughout society, the realm of “what everybody knows”, in this case the pseudo-knowledge of how blacks are supposed to be treated. At the same time, the lyrics and the percussion evoke the sounds of resistance in the drumming of the Afro-*blocos*. Their epic grandeur dazzles us, but this kind of culturalist strength is ultimately insufficient when citizenship is so fragile and compromised. And it doesn’t matter that Lente Fantastico visits Salvador, or that Paul Simon collaborates with Olodum to make “Spirit of the Saints”. The song alludes, then, to the differentiated commonalities of the Black Atlantic, where Brazil both is like, and is not like Haiti: Haiti is here. Haiti isn’t here.

A good deal of the multicultural work in both Brazil and the US has focused on racial representation in the media. In his book *The Negation of Brazil (A negação do Brasil)*, Joel Zito Araújo (2000) points out that Brazilian blacks are very much under-represented on Brazilian television, and when they do appear it is usually as subalterns or background figures. Araújo discusses the historical incident in which a Brazilian TV series, based on Uncle Tom’s Cabin, offended the black

community by using a white actor in blackface for the title role. The Gilberto Gil song “Mao de Limpeza”, here performed with Chico Buarque de Hollanda, also uses blackface, but this time in a comic and carnivalesque register. The song’s lyrics satirically upend a Brazilian proverb that suggests that “blacks, if they don’t make a mess at the entrance, will make it at the exit”. Calling that view “a damned lie”, the singers proceed to disentangle the association between blackness and dirtiness. The lyrics go as follows:

The Hand of Cleanliness
 They say that when blacks don't make a mess at the entrance
 They make it at the exit.
 Imagine!
 But the slave mother spent her life
 Cleaning up the mess that whites made
 Imagine!
 What a damned lie!
 Even after slavery was abolished
 Blacks continued cleaning clothes
 And scrubbing floors
 How the blacks worked and suffered!
 Imagine!
 Black is the hand of cleanliness
 Of life consumed at the side of the stove.
 Black is the hand that puts food on the table
 And cleans with soap and water.
 Black is the hand of immaculate purity.
 They say when blacks don't make a mess at the entrance
 They make it at the exit
 Imagine!
 What a damned lie!
 Look at the dirty white guy.

In this song Gil provokes a Brechtian *Verfremdungseffekt*; he makes the *doxa* of racist common sense strange. Imagine! How could anyone ever have associated blackness with dirtiness! Even the style is Brechtian in that it recuperates an “incorrect” stereotype within an anti-illusionist aesthetic. The phenotypic white singer Chico appears in blackface, while Gil, the black, appears in whiteface, but we are not supposed to believe that Chico is really black or Gil white. In cultural terms, the references are at least double, to the “boneca de pixe” (tar baby) tradition in Brazil and to the racist North American tradition of minstrels, but “Hand of Cleanliness” is written and performed in a completely different spirit. Here, the idea of blackface comes not from

white media entrepreneurs but from the black artist himself. And with minstrels, blackface usually functioned alone; there was no whiteface. Blackface was unilateral, premised on whiteness as normative and blackness as intrinsically comic and grotesque. But here, in a sly Brazilian version of the costumed inversions of Genet's play *The Blacks. A Clown Show* (Genet 1960), the song overturns the racist binarism which equates blackness with dirtiness; here blackness connotes immaculate purity. At the same time, the parodic and stylized performance itself implies the transcendence of the black/white binarism: the two singers are obviously friends, obviously playing at carnival, and obviously having a very good time. The racism of the proverb does not mean that whites and blacks cannot be friends or fight together against racism.

At this point, I would like to bring the discussion back to anthropophagy and the native Brazilian. The modernists, as we suggested earlier, linked the Indian to a counter-modernity of indigenous egalitarianism. The only problem with the modernist discourse was its failure to link these ideas to the actually existing Indians of Brazil. In this sense, modernism continued the Romantic stream of Indianismo which exalted a safely remote and symbolic Indian, without actually engaging with the flesh-and-blood Indians being dispossessed around Brazil. But with the advent, in the 1980s, of "indigenous media", we find the present-day avatars of another modernist concept, Oswald's idea of the "indio tecnizado". The "high-tech Indians" of indigenous media use audio-visual media such as camcorders and VCRs to preserve and reinvigorate their traditions, and strategize against dispossession; the media become a recombinant means of cultural invention, a form of technological anthropophagy.

The final clip, a Caetano song called "The Indian", brings us full-circle. The sentiments expressed in the song are not so distant from a recent "Solemn Declaration of Indigenous Peoples", which proclaimed that "We the indigenous peoples declare to all nations. We are from a millennial lineage, and we are millions. And even if our entire universe is destroyed, we will live, longer than the empire of death".¹ And indeed, Brazil in recent years has witnessed an Indian resurgence and rediscovery of Indian identity, as Sergio Costa has described in a

1 Quoted in Iokoi (1998: 47-48).

recent essay. Peoples thought to be on the verge of extinction have experienced upsurges in population and renewed pride.

The song's references, once again, are transnational, ranging from traditional indigenous culture (the reading of the night's starry face for signs and omens) to 19th century Indianismo (Peri from *O Guarani*), to Modernismo (the echoes of Oswald's technicized Indian), to Bahian culture (the "Sons of Gandhi"), all alongside a postmodern multiracial gallery of pop culture heroes.

Caetano and Gil, in sum, show how music and cinema can transfigure historical relationalities in ways at once cosmopolitan, international and very Brazilian. Their art stages multicultural conflicts and connections in ways that complement and sometimes even transcend the methods of written history and the social sciences. Artists like Caetano and Gil display a chameleonic ability to move easily between various cultural repertoires, to negotiate multiple worlds in a ludic dance of identities reminiscent of carnival and *candomblé*. They "perform" the cultural debates in visual, sensuous, and percussive form. Whenever I present the music of Caetano and Gil, someone usually complains that the music is not really revolutionary since it is still a commodity sold through transnational corporations. That is true enough on one level, and I am not presenting Caetano and Gil as political models, or even claiming that they are revolutionary. These questions are ultimately much more complicated. Popular music cannot create a revolution, but it can provide a revolution's soundtrack. Brazil, Caetano once said, has created the world's most charming protest music, and in Brazil songs like Gil's "Aquele Abraco", and Chico's "Apesar de Voce", or "Vai Passar" became veritable political anthems. Popular music may not create a revolution, but it does matter, in the end, if masses of people listen to Gil rather than Xuxa, or to Public Enemy rather than Britney Spears. When popular musicians are dismissed as not revolutionary, one wonders to whom they are being compared. Is it to Lenin and Trotsky and Che Guevara – in which case they will definitely be found insufficiently revolutionary. Perhaps they should better be compared to other musicians, to politicized rappers for example, or to poets like Haroldo dos Campos, or intellectuals like Roberto Schwarz or Stuart Hall.

Music is not a mere mirror of identity; rather, it shapes, critiques, and fashions new forms of identity and identification. "Haiti e aqui",

for example, makes the middle-class white listener, who might not have personally suffered discrimination or police brutality in the flesh, think about those issues, much as Bertold Brecht's poem about "Marie Farrar, infanticide" made its readers think about the abuse of maids in Weimar Germany. Music and art create new registers of feeling, channeling empathy to help us see and feel the world differently. The songs we have heard, I would argue, demonstrate music's capacity to give pleasurable, kinetic shape to social desire, to mobilize feeling in a popular and mass-mediated form. Tropicalia inhabits, to borrow Caetano's own words about Jorge Bem, "the transhistorical utopian country which we have a duty to construct and which lives inside all of us".

Video clips and lyrics

Terra em Transe: The Film that Catalyzed Tropicalia

Video 1: Glauber Rocha's "Terra em Transe" (1967).

New York, Sao Paulo and the Africanization of World Culture:

Video 2: Gil's "Funk-se Quem Puder"

Funk-Yourself if you can/ It's imperative to dance/ Feel the impulse/
 Throw your butt around/ Tasting the Rhythm
 Funk-yourself if you can/ It's imperative to play/ Fire in the vertebrae/
 Fire in the muscles/ Music in all the atoms
 Our Atlantic, Athletic, romantic, poetic Republic of Music...
 Funk Yourself if you can/ It's time to throw everything upside down/
 without panic/ a quick form of playing/ time to swim back to mother
 Africa...

The History of Black Revolt:

Gilberto Gil's music for Carlos Diegues' "Quilombo" (1984)

"Quilombo: the Black Eldorado of Brazil"

It existed/the black Eldorado of Brazil/ It existed/ like a burst of light that
 freedom produced/ It reflected/the divine light, the holy fire of Olorum/
 and it came back to life/ the Utopia of one for all and all for one...
 It existed/ the black Eldorado of Brazil/ It existed/ It lived, struggled, fell,
 died, and came back to life
 A peacock of many colors, the carnival of my dreams... Quilombo,
 Quilombo

The Reality of Police Brutality:

DVD 1: Gilberto Gil and Caetano Veloso: "Haiti e Aqui" (performed
 by Caetano)

The Subversive Uses of Blackface:

Video 3: Gilberto Gil: "Mao de Limpeza" (performed with Chico Buarque de Hollanda)

They say that when blacks don't make a mess at the entrance
 They make it at the exit
 Just Imagine!
 The slave mother spent her life
 Cleaning up the mess that whites made
 Just Imagine!
 What a damned lie!
 Even after slavery was abolished
 Black continued cleaning clothes
 And scrubbing floors
 How the blacks worked and suffered!
 Just Imagine!
 Black is the hand of cleanliness
 Of life consumed at the side of the stove
 Black is the hand that puts food on the table
 And cleans with soap and water
 Black is the hand of Immaculate Purity
 They say when blacks don't make a mess at the entrance
 They make it at the exit
 What a damned lie!
 Look at the dirty white guy!

The Post-modern Indian: Kayapos with Camcorders:

Video 4: Caetano Veloso: "The Indian"

After the last indigenous nation will have been exterminated,
 And the spirit of the birds from the springs of clear water
 More advanced than the most advanced of the most advanced of technologies.
 He will come/ Fearless like Muhammad Ali
 (He'll come since I saw him)
 Passionately loving like Peri (He'll come since I saw him)
 Cool and infallible like Bruce Lee (He'll come since I saw him)
 The axe (energy) of the afoxe of Gandhi
 Will come...

Addendum: The Politics of Syncretism:

Lyrics to Gilberto Gil's "From Bob Dylan to Bob Marley: A Provocation Samba"

Soon after Bob Dylan converted to Christianity, he made a reggae album as a form of compensation/ He abandoned the Jewish people, but returned to them while heading in the wrong direction ... When the peoples of Africa arrived in Brazil, there was no freedom of religion. As a result,

Africans in Brazil adopted Our Lord of Bomfim, an act both of resistance and surrender.

Refrain:

Bob Marley died/ Because besides being black/ He was Jewish/ Michael Jackson/ meanwhile/ is still around, but besides becoming white/ he's become very sad.

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